

Night watch

Shun midnight snacking to ward off obesity

IT IS NOT just a high-fat diet, but the extended eating time - a consequence of people consuming midnight snacks - that may contribute to your body weight, a study co-authored by an Indian-origin scientist suggests.

Confining eating to an 8-12 hour period, as people did just a century ago, might stave off high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity, the findings showed. The authors demonstrated that predictable times of eating better synchronises the function of hundreds of genes in our body.

"These days, most of the advice is, 'you have to change nutrition, you have to eat a healthy diet'," noted corresponding author Satchidananda Panda, associate professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in the US.

"But many people do not

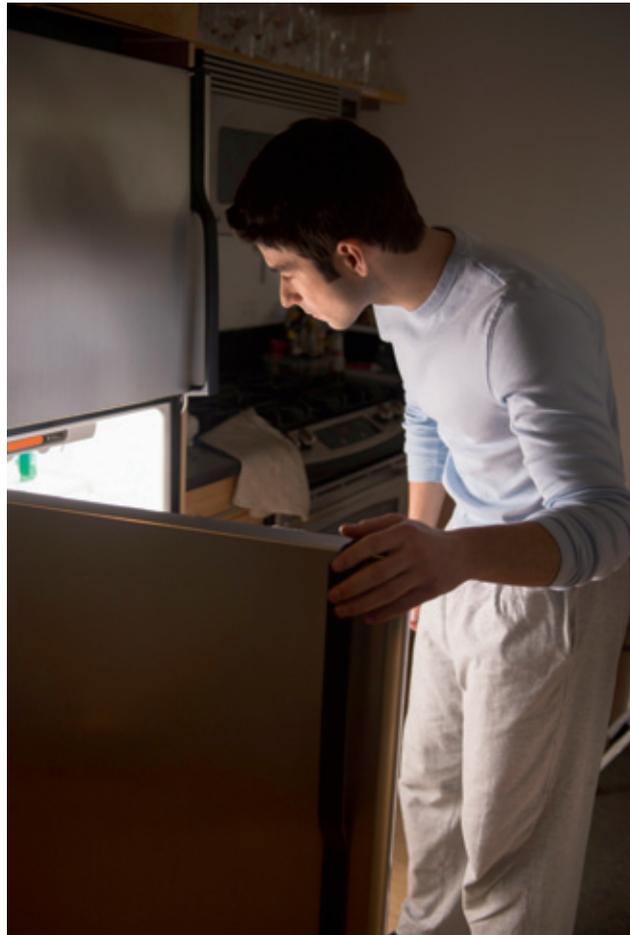
have access to healthy diets. So the question is, without access to a healthy diet, can they still practise time-restricted feeding and reap some benefit?" Panda added.

The new study showed the benefits of time restriction is surprisingly more profound than initially thought and can reverse obesity and diabetes in animal models.

The researchers subjected nearly 400 mice, ranging from normal to obese, to various types of diets and lengths of time restrictions.

Regardless of whether their diets were high in fat, fat and sucrose or just fructose, mice that were given time restrictions of 9 to 12 hours - and consumed the same amount of daily calories as their unrestricted counterparts - gained less weight than the controls.

The study appeared in the journal *Cell Metabolism*. IANS



Get some sun

Vitamin D deficiency linked to depression

VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY is not just harmful to physical health - it might also impact your mental health, says a new research. The researchers found a link between seasonal depression (seasonal affective disorder or SAD) and a lack of sunlight.

"Rather than being one of many factors, vitamin D could have a regulative role in the development of SAD," said Alan Stewart of the University of Georgia College of Education in the US.

The researchers conducted a review of more than 100 leading articles and found a relationship between vitamin D and seasonal depression.

"Seasonal affective disorder is a type of depression related to changes in season," Stewart added.

Vitamin D is involved in the synthesis of serotonin and dopamine within the brain, both chemicals linked to depression, according to the researchers. Vitamin D levels of more than 50 nanomoles per litre are recommended by the US Institute of Medicine.

"What we know now is that there are strong indications that maintaining adequate levels of vitamin D is also important for good mental health," said Michael Kimlin from the Queensland University of Technology in Australia.

"A few minutes of sunlight exposure each day should be enough for most people to maintain an adequate vitamin D status," he added.

The findings appeared in the journal *Medical Hypotheses*. IANS

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Synchronise your body and mind

WHENEVER I TRAVEL to New York or Los Angeles, I am surprised to find different versions of yoga. There is hot yoga, cold yoga, steam yoga, kundalini yoga... the list is endless. I even tried attending one of the sessions of hot yoga. The temperature in the studio was raised to 40 degrees Celsius and we were made to sweat it out. Beautiful ladies in their latest designer workout wear were a shade of cherry red! I was amazed at how many people bought into this version of yoga. Over the years I have tried different classes in many countries and I have only been disappointed. Very few people practise yoga the way it needs to be practiced. Simplicity and authenticity is the key to practising yoga.

Yoga is a spiritual, mental and physical practice of discipline. The main aim of yoga is to not only transform the body but also the mind. If the mind and body are in sync and at peace with each other, big transformations can be achieved. There are many different types of schools of yoga. Hatha yoga focuses on gentle movements with focus on meditation and the correct breathing techniques. Vinyasa yoga on the other hand is a branch of Hatha yoga with special focus on sun salutations. Ashtanga yoga focuses on eight limbs or eight aspects. This is truly a form of power yoga, as it is fast paced and involves postures to pump up your heart rate. While Iyengar yoga covers all eight aspects of Ashtanga yoga and also focuses on bodily alignment. Different props like straps, blankets, and blocks are used to assist in strengthening the body. Standing poses are emphasised, and are often held for long periods of time to control and tame the body.

Depending on your personality type and exercise preference, you should pick the style of yoga that suits you best. People who think that yoga is not challenging enough have obviously not tried Ashtanga yoga. If you are into relaxation and meditation then Hatha yoga is best suited to you. But if flexibility is your goal then Iyengar yoga should be on your list of things to do.

In the end, no matter which school you pick, as long as you practise a few times a week, you are likely to see results. Initially you will be struggling and your mind will be all over the place. But over the next few months you will notice that your mind is still and in the present moment while practising yoga postures. And this is the main aim of yoga - synchronisation of the mind and the body.

Shivani Adalja is a Dubai-based wellbeing expert. She runs the Alignment Insitute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing. Email align@shivaniadalja.com

